

January 28th 1899.

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen,

It is again my duty to present to you my annual statement as to the health of the district during the past year, and I am pleased to be able to report that the death rate is much lower and the number of infectious cases much less than for many years past.

My information as to the sanitary state of the district has been obtained by regular inspection of the various villages, and sanitary defects at these inspections have been reported to the Council at their monthly meetings.

The number of deaths registered for the year was 79 to which must be added the deaths of two persons in the Warminster Cottage Hospital of persons belonging to the district, thus making the total 81, which is equal to a deathrate of 10.8 per 1000.

No death has occurred from zymotic diseases and the deathrate of the young children is much below the average.

The births numbered 145, equal to a birthrate of 19.4 per 1000.

The following table epitomises the ages at which deaths occurred throughout the district.

Under one year of age	5
Over one and under five years of age	1
Over five and under fifteen years of age	0
Over fifteen and under twenty five years of age	2
Over twenty five and under sixty five years of age	22
Over sixty five years of age	49
	<hr/> 79 <hr/>

I will now allude to the presence of infectious diseases during the year.

Only one case of Diphtheria and two cases of Scarlet Fever were reported to me. Measles were very prevalent in some of the villages during the latter part of the year and the schools at Codford St Peter and Heytesbury were closed for some weeks in consequence, but no fatal case occurred. Enteric Fever, Three cases were reported to me, one at

Corsley, one at Horningsham, and one at Sutton Veny, it is very difficult in isolated cases like these, especially when only one member of a large family is infected, to determine the exact cause of infection, but in the case at Sutton Veny, I think it was caused by using the water from a well on the floor of the bakehouse, which on account of the pump being out of order was used as a dip well and which most likely became contaminated from the sweepings of the floor.

During the year I have examined four samples of water, two of which I found impure and unfit for domestic use. It does not necessarily follow that all impure waters are equally dangerous to health, and it is erroneous to think that the daily use of chemically impure water is bound to produce fever or some other defined illness, such a consequence is the exception, the most dangerous condition of contamination is when the water is polluted by recent human excreta in which case the water is invariably dangerous to use.

Three villages in the district have a regular water supply and there are rumours of ~~the~~ other villages having a supply shortly.

In some of the villages the water was very low during the late dry summer and advantage was taken of this to clean out many of the wells.

None of the villages in the district have any proper system of sewerage nor can I think it is required, as the farmhouses, and other private residences have their own cesspits or dead wells at some distance from the house, and the water supply, and the cottages have gardens round their dwellings on which to dispose of the contents of their closets which in most cases are emptied at regular intervals. The old style of privy is still very much in vogue, but by degrees we get them replaced by closets of more modern construction, and if on our inspection we find any of these old closets too near the cottages, or water supply, we order them either to be removed, or replaced by earth closets and also satisfy ourselves by analysis that the water has not become impure by percolation.

The cottage accommodation is ample, but as the population decreases year by year, the worst cottages become vacant and are ^{eventually} pulled down. I do not think there is a village in the district at the present time in

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which there is not one or more empty cottages. I am well aware that many of the cottages at present inhabited are very defective, the floors being damp at times, the ceilings low, and with bedrooms situated immediately under the roof, without fireplaces, and with small windows almost on a level with the floor, and yet with all these drawbacks, the agricultural labourer will as a rule prefer a cottage of this description to one of more modern build.

Only three registered slaughter houses are situated in the district, and these together with the dairies and bakehouses have been regularly inspected and found in a satisfactory condition.

No common lodginghouses exist in the district and no offensive trades are carried on.

The pollution of the River Wylde by sewage matter as mentioned in previous reports is now remedied, all the privies, that were situated near, and discharged their contents directly into the river are now converted into earth closets.

I beg to submit with this report the usual tables dealing with the mortality, and prevalence of infectious diseases during the past year.

I am

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Fred J. Flower".

Med: Officer of Health to the Warminster
Rural District Council.

To the Chairman
Rural District Council
Warminster.

